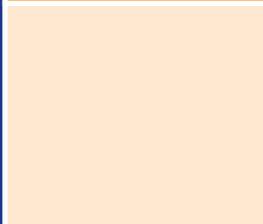


ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK September 2012



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL FOR INDEPENDENT FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION



ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

September 2012

Welcome to the British Accreditation Council

For over 25 years we have been responsible for setting standards within the independent further and higher education sector and our accreditation is held by hundreds of colleges in the UK and overseas.

We provide the leading mark of educational quality for the sector, which is used by students, parents, agencies and beyond as a guarantee of standards.

In this handbook you will find the latest information, updates and documentation needed for achieving and retaining accreditation, along with detail relating to the additional services and support BAC provides.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

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1. INTRODUCTION TO BAC

The British Accreditation Council (BAC) was established in 1984 to be the national accrediting authority for independent further and higher education in the United Kingdom (UK). The non-publicly funded institutions accredited by BAC cover a diverse range of provision, from sixth-form colleges to specialist schools of art and design, recognised higher degree providers and world-renowned centres for qualifications in the professions.

Over the last quarter century the independent education sector has seen steady but substantial growth and has been a major contributing factor to the economic success of the UK education market. Increasingly, independent institutions have catered for specialist areas which the publicly funded sector does not widely cover; they have also provided a cost-effective route for students to study in the UK. Independent institutions have played a large part in the UK's growth as an international education destination, and each year thousands of students from Europe and beyond choose to pursue further and higher education in the UK.

Since 2000, BAC has also accredited a number of independent education providers operating outside the UK, and has expanded this offer to acknowledge the growth of quality international and transnational education.

1.1 The purposes of accreditation

In awarding accreditation, BAC has four main purposes:

- **TO SUPPORT AND ADVISE** independent institutions of further or higher education in the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of their provision
- **TO PROVIDE INDEPENDENT GUIDANCE** to students seeking to undertake further or higher education in a an institution outside the state sector
- **TO PROVIDE ASSURANCE** of the good standing of an institution to government departments and other interested bodies
- **TO ENABLE AN INSTITUTION** to state publicly that it has voluntarily accepted independent inspection and has satisfied BAC that all relevant aspects of its operation are maintained at a satisfactory level.

1.2 General requirements

The award of accreditation is subject to your institution meeting standards established and periodically reviewed by BAC. The accreditation process involves a rigorous on-site inspection focusing on the quality assurance processes of the institution in a number of distinct areas: management, student welfare, teaching, and facilities. Details of the minimum standards for each these areas are included in the individual scheme documents which can be found on the BAC website.

Not only must an accredited institution meet and continue to meet the specific minimum standards listed for each of the inspection areas but the inspection report must also indicate that the overall standard of provision in each area is satisfactory before accreditation will be awarded.

Once accredited, your institution must submit to a regular monitoring process involving annual data returns, financial analysis, and interim, supplementary and spot check inspections. You must also pay all applicable fees and maintain a transparent and constructive relationship with BAC by notifying us of any changes, responding to any requests for information and cooperating with BAC's procedures for investigating student complaints (see section 10 of this handbook).

An essential requirement of BAC accreditation is that all institutions continue to meet their statutory obligations to comply with all relevant laws and regulations.

1. INTRODUCTION TO BAC

1.3 General eligibility criteria

Any independent education institution is eligible for accreditation provided that the following requirements are met:

- The institution offers programmes of further and/or higher education.
- The institution is able to provide evidence of its financial stability.
- Effective control of the institution is the responsibility of an accountable management.
- The institution is led by a proprietor or designated principal/director, who must be legally resident either in the UK or in its main area of operation, with clear contractual responsibilities for the running of the institution and for the quality of its work.
- There are no grounds for believing the proprietor, principal/director or any other senior manager to be unfit to be in charge of the institution. Such grounds may include an assessment of any previous position held at another institution known to BAC, in particular any institution which consistently failed to meet BAC's standards or which failed to pay debts owed to BAC.

Specific eligibility criteria for the different accreditation schemes can be found within the appropriate scheme document.

For further eligibility criteria for the two international accreditation schemes for those institutions operating outside the UK, please see the relevant scheme documents.

Ineligible institutions

The following types of institution will not normally be considered eligible for accreditation:

- Institutions which are wholly publicly funded, or which are wholly responsible to a government department or an institution in receipt of direct state grants, and thereby subject to Ofsted inspection or QAA audit.
- Institutions which are solely or predominantly providers of education for students of compulsory school age (i.e. 16 years and under).
- Institutions which are solely or predominantly providers of courses in English as a foreign language (EFL) or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

These types of institution are normally unsuited to BAC accreditation because more appropriate alternatives exist: a government-regulated quality assurance framework for schools and publicly funded institutions, and the British Council's Accreditation UK scheme for EFL/ESOL providers.

1.4 How BAC operates

As a not-for-profit charity, BAC is governed by its Council, with operational decision-making delegated to two committees, the Executive Committee and the Accreditation Committee. The implementation of the systems and procedures which BAC has in place is managed by the head office staff under the guidance and leadership of the Chief Executive.

Council

The Council comprises individuals and nominees of stakeholder organisations which are closely involved in maintaining educational standards. The Council meets twice each year, normally in April and November. Any significant changes to BAC's conditions, standards and criteria implemented by the Executive Committee must be ratified by the Council. Details of the members of the Council can be found on the BAC website.

The Executive Committee

The Council delegates responsibility for BAC's strategic direction to the Executive Committee, which acts as a board of directors for the company. The members, elected by and from the main Council, also serve as the trustees of the charity. The Chair of Council also chairs meetings of the Executive Committee. Details of the members of the Executive Committee can be found on the BAC website.

The Accreditation Committee

The Accreditation Committee (or an agreed sub-committee of its members) has full delegated authority from the Council to award, refuse, defer, suspend or withdraw accreditation. It discharges this duty after considering the reports of inspections carried out on institutions, with the range of possible decisions set out in section 7 of this handbook. The individual criteria which inform the decisions can be found in the scheme documents.

In addition to making case-by-case decisions on the accreditation of institutions, the Accreditation Committee also has responsibility for keeping BAC's accreditation conditions, standards and criteria under review. Any changes considered appropriate will be recommended to the Executive Committee which may then decide to implement them, subject to ratification by the Council at its next meeting. Further terms of reference for the Accreditation Committee are available on request from the BAC office. Details of the members of the Accreditation Committee can be found on the BAC website.

Head office staff

BAC's committees and inspectors are supported by a core team of administrative staff at the head office in London. Led by the Chief Executive, the staff are responsible for the day-to-day running of the business of BAC, including management of inspections, oversight of accredited institutions and communication with the public and with education sectors.

The inspectorate

BAC has approximately 50 independent, experienced and trusted inspectors who it can call on when conducting an institutional inspection. Inspection teams are selected on the basis of qualities which include sector experience (especially in quality assurance at a senior level) and subject specialism to ensure a level of knowledge appropriate to each particular institution.

The Head of Professional Services maintains oversight of the entire inspection process and advises on the ongoing development of inspection policies and processes, including team selection, monitoring of reports, inspector training and the ongoing development of inspection processes and criteria.

1.5 Regulatory framework and information sharing

While BAC is a non-governmental organisation and a registered charity, overseeing a voluntary accreditation scheme, it plays a key role in the sector which requires close and transparent collaboration with local authorities, central government, its agencies and other bodies concerned with standards in further and higher education.

Several such bodies are represented on BAC's governing Council of stakeholders, which receives detailed reports on BAC activities at its biannual meetings and additional, occasional memoranda in the interim. The Council does not ordinarily receive inspection reports or other institution-specific information.

There are a number of bodies with which BAC has developed broader information-sharing protocols or memoranda of agreement and with which specific data can be shared about institutions in which the body has an explicit interest. By submitting an application for accreditation, all institutions acknowledge and agree to these agreements.

Bodies with which BAC may share such institution-specific data include: the Department for Education; the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills; the Home Office and UK

Border Agency (UKBA); Ofsted; the Accreditation Unit of the British Council; the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and other UKBA-approved educational oversight bodies; the Open University Validation Services and the external validation department of any UK university of which the institution is a partner; any recognised UK awarding body whose programmes the institution offers; the associations Study UK or English UK where the institution is a member or is applying for membership; Trading Standards; the police and any other body deemed by BAC to have a legitimate, explicit interest in the institution in question.

BAC also routinely provides some or all of the above bodies with a list of institutions which are newly accredited, approved as candidates, or have had their accreditation withdrawn.

1.6 The accreditation cycle

Accredited institutions operating in the UK and International Higher Education institutions must apply for reaccreditation every four years. Institutions holding International Centre accreditation must apply for reaccreditation every three years. All institutions applying for reaccreditation must undergo a full inspection. In considering a report on an accredited institution, the Accreditation Committee may either award reaccreditation for another three or four years, defer a decision pending the resolution of minor issues, or withdraw accreditation from the institution should it have failed to maintain the standards required.

Any institution which has been unsuccessful in either gaining or retaining accreditation may appeal against the decision of the Accreditation Committee (see section 9 of this handbook).

2. ACCREDITATION SCHEMES

BAC has a number of accreditation schemes. Each scheme has its own documentation regarding eligibility, accreditation standards and cycle, the inspection process, fees, accreditation marks and minimum standards. A short summary of each scheme is outlined below. Further information can be found in the appropriate accreditation scheme document, which can be found on the BAC website.

2.1 College accreditation

While the same standards are required of all institutions accredited under this scheme, the range of provision on offer is very broad, including:

- Adult education and skills for life
- Business and professional education
- Creative and performing arts
- Specialist vocational training
- Study abroad placements
- Traditional higher education
- Tutorial colleges
- University preparation

BAC's College accreditation scheme covers the full range of activities provided by a college or similar institution, and is not restricted to specific courses within the total operation. A college is awarded accreditation for a period of up to four years, subject to a satisfactory interim inspection and its meeting all the responsibilities of an accredited institution (see section 7 of this handbook). This accreditation does not extend to activities which take place outside the institution itself (for instance, franchised programmes, satellite summer schools or separate branches, whether in the UK or overseas) or which are promoted and delivered under a different name, unless BAC has given specific approval for the inclusion of such activities within the institution's accreditation.

Institutions are assessed against the full set of accreditation standards described in the College accreditation scheme document and must meet all of these minimum standards. Documents outlining these minimum standards and other scheme details are available on request from the BAC office or available to download from the BAC website.

Independent higher education institutions

BAC has developed specific, additional criteria for the award of accreditation as an independent higher education institution. Independent Higher Education Institution accreditation is available to institutions which wholly or predominantly offer programmes at the level of higher education, normally in partnership with an accredited university or other higher

education awarding body, and which offer students a range of resources appropriate to those studying at the level of higher education.

While all the minimum standards required for accreditation must still be met, independent higher education institutions applying under this scheme will be required to meet specific criteria which either replace or are additional to those for colleges. Documents outlining these standards and other details are available on request from the BAC office or available to download from the BAC website.

Independent tutorial colleges

BAC has developed specific, additional criteria for the award of accreditation as an independent tutorial college. Independent Tutorial College accreditation is available to institutions which wholly or predominantly offer programmes aimed at preparing students for university entry, and which offer students a high level of tutorial and pastoral support that is sensitive to their individual needs.

While all the minimum standards required for accreditation must still be met, independent tutorial colleges will be required to meet specific criteria which either replace or are additional to those for colleges. Documents outlining these standards and other details are available on request from the BAC office or can be downloaded from the BAC website.

Independent tutorial colleges which enrol school-age students and are therefore subject to statutory inspection may be eligible for a 'top-up' inspection by BAC (see section 6.2.4 of this handbook for details).

Small specialist colleges

BAC has developed specific criteria for the award of accreditation to small, specialist colleges. These are applicable to small institutions offering creative and performing arts (the Small Creative and Performing Arts colleges scheme, or SCAPA), theological and religious education (the Small Theological and Religious Education colleges scheme, or STARE), or specialist teacher training (the Small Specialist Teacher Training colleges scheme, or SSTT). Institutions wishing to find out more about these schemes and if they might be eligible should contact the BAC office. Prospective applicants will need to complete a questionnaire and return it to the BAC office in order for their eligibility to be determined.

2.2 Short course provider accreditation

Short course providers offer a range of short, part-time or full-time courses of a flexible nature and often in an environment quite different to that of a college. The short course provider accreditation scheme is available for training providers where all the courses at the institution run for 26 weeks or less.

While all the applicable minimum standards required for accreditation must still be met, short course providers applying under this scheme will be required to meet the scheme-specific minimum standards, which either replace or are additional to those for colleges. Documents outlining the short course provider scheme details are available on request from the BAC office or available to download from the BAC website.

2.3 Online, distance and blended learning accreditation

BAC's online, distance and blended learning scheme is appropriate if your institution provides online, distance or blended learning. The process of application, inspection and accreditation has been adapted to assess online teaching and learning. If you offer some face-to-face teaching and learning in connection with your online and distance programmes, BAC will also inspect this part of your provision including: premises, classrooms, policies on attendance, additional facilities for both learners and staff, learner support offered and, where relevant, appropriate provision for international learners and with regard to residential or home-stay accommodation.

Documents outlining the minimum standards for online, distance and blended learning accreditation and other scheme details are available on request from the BAC office or available to download from the BAC website.

2.4 International accreditation schemes

BAC international accreditation provides institutions operating outside the UK with the opportunity to gain accreditation. There are two schemes for international accreditation: one for institutions having specific links to a UK higher education provider (International Higher Education Institution); and one for globally recognised institutions (International Centre).

Although both schemes offer the award of BAC international accreditation, there are differences with regard to eligibility and application procedures and the accreditation cycle which need to be considered before an application is made.

Documents outlining the minimum standards for both independent higher education institution and international centre accreditation and relevant scheme details are available on request from the BAC office or available to download from the BAC website.

3. BENEFITS OF BAC ACCREDITATION

Becoming an institution accredited by BAC provides you with not only a globally recognised mark of quality; it also brings with it a number of additional benefits for both you and your students.

3.1 Benefits to institutions

Mark of quality

Accreditation by an independent, well-established and globally-recognised national accreditation body. Once accredited, you can display the appropriate BAC logo and accreditation statement on your publicity materials. Further information about your institution can be made available on the BAC website if you choose to be one of our featured institutions.

Listing in the BAC institutional directory

Accreditation by BAC means that your institution will be listed on the BAC website, providing information for external agencies and prospective students about you and the courses you offer.

Staying informed

Continuing advice and updates on UK statutory changes through regular email information bulletins and on the BAC website.

International recruitment

For institutions operating in the UK, BAC accreditation entitles you to enrol international students on UK student visitor visas for courses of up to six months.

Professional development

You will receive invitations at discounted rates to attend our best practice seminars and other professional development events. We have also negotiated discounted rates for accredited institutions with a number of industry conference and event providers.

Raising standards

Our inspections are conducted by highly experienced inspectors with extensive knowledge of the sector and they can provide you with invaluable advice on your quality assurance processes through the inspection process.

Access to a range of exclusive and discounted services

Discounted services including HR advice, CPD and consultancy. Full details of the discounts your institution can access as a result of becoming a BAC-accredited institution can be found on our website.

A voice in the sector

Accredited institutions qualify for membership of Study UK, an association which gives a unified voice to bona fide private education institutions.

3.2 Benefits to students

Students benefit from studying at an independent education provider, due to their small classes and their focus on specialist vocational programmes. Selecting one of BAC's accredited institutions provides them with additional security and support.

- Choosing a BAC-accredited institution provides students and their families with assurance that all areas of provision meet the standards set out in this handbook and accompanying scheme documents.
- If an accredited institution does not continue to meet our published standards, students may be able to seek support and advice through our complaints procedure (see section 10 of this handbook). This provides students with additional assurance about the operation of your institution.

4. THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Accreditation is based on an inspection of the full range of your institution's provision, and we also require evidence that your management maintains acceptable standards and its legal obligations during the period of accreditation.

Prospective institutions undergo a first level of scrutiny by BAC staff through the application review stage. Once this is completed, you will receive a rigorous inspection which assesses your provision against the minimum standards set out in the relevant scheme document. A report of this inspection is then considered by the Accreditation Committee, which can decide to award, defer or refuse accreditation based on the evidence of whether all minimum standards have been met.

Whilst BAC's inspectors and staff always attempt to offer helpful advice, you should bear in mind that we are primarily an inspection body and, therefore, in applying for accreditation, you must be prepared to accept constructive criticism of your provision as well as positive comment on good practice from our inspectors.

If an accredited institution wishes to amend the type or scope of its accreditation, a formal request and rationale will be required. BAC's Accreditation Committee will then consider whether a further inspection is required before such a change can be granted.

4.1 Scope of accreditation

As BAC accredits institutions in their entirety, all your provision must be declared so that it can be considered with your application and assessed in the course of subsequent inspections. While accreditation applies to your institution as a whole, BAC can only assess the provision that is in place at the time of application. This makes it essential that you notify us should any significant changes take place, or be planned, so that students and other interested parties can be confident that your accreditation constitutes a comprehensive and current evaluation of your institution.

4.2 Steps involved in the accreditation process

- Research and preparation by the institution.
- The institution completes and submits its application for accreditation.
- BAC reviews the application form and supporting documentation.
- BAC arranges an inspection in consultation with the institution.
- The institution submits its self-evaluation documentation against defined criteria.
- The inspection is conducted by a specialist inspection team.
- The inspection report is submitted to BAC.
- The inspection report is considered by the Accreditation Committee.
- BAC notifies the institution of the Accreditation Committee's decision.

BAC accreditation is a rigorous process, involving several stages before successful completion and therefore it is likely to be several months between the date of application and the award of accreditation. How long it takes, though, is dependent largely on the quality of your initial application. If the application form is completed in full and all supporting documentation submitted at the time of application, it may exceptionally be possible to complete the review of your application within four weeks, schedule an accreditation inspection within eight weeks and for accreditation to be awarded within four months.

4. THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

4.3 Costs of accreditation

Full details of the fees associated with inspection and accreditation can be found on the current fees sheet which is available from the BAC office and can be downloaded from the BAC website.

The main costs involved are:

- Application fee (standard and non-refundable fee).
- Inspection fee (variable depending on the type and scope of inspection required).
- Annual accreditation fee (variable depending on the size of your institution and the type of accreditation awarded).
- Cost of interim inspection (only applicable to institutions operating outside the UK).
- Inspection fee for a reaccreditation inspection every three or four years.
- Inspection fee for any additional inspections required by BAC (after either a significant change at the institution or a failure to comply with BAC's regulations for accredited institutions).

5. APPLICATION

5.1 Applying for accreditation

If your institution is considering submitting an application for accreditation you should first read this accreditation handbook and the relevant scheme documents and ensure that you understand the application process, the standard of provision required and the responsibilities placed upon you by BAC accreditation.

Prior to preparing your application, you will need to decide which scheme is appropriate for your institution. If you remain unsure of your institution's eligibility or which is the most appropriate scheme, please contact the BAC office for advice. The application form for each accreditation scheme, with relevant guidance notes, can be downloaded from the BAC website.

Having read, understood and accepted the terms set out in the accreditation handbook and associated documentation, you should begin your preparations for making an application. You will need to gather a significant amount of documentation for making an application, a list of which is published in the relevant scheme document.

The documentation for application for accreditation comprises:

- The appropriate application form for unaccredited institutions.
- Required supporting documentation.
- Payment covering both the non-refundable application fee and a deposit for inspection fee (see fees sheet).

You should follow closely the instructions on the application form, making use of the associated guidance notes where needed, in order to complete the form and its appendices with all necessary information, as well as gathering the required supporting documentation. You will need to complete all sections of the application form carefully. Please contact the BAC office if you have any queries about the completion of the application form.

Three copies of the completed application form and all supporting documentation should be submitted to the BAC office. We cannot process your application until all the required documentation has been received along with full payment of the application and deposit for inspection fees.

5.2 Application review

You will receive confirmation that your application has been received within five working days of submission, but the review of your application will take up to four weeks to allow for proper scrutiny. This formal evaluation process is undertaken by trained BAC staff and will begin with a review of the application form and accompanying documentation, in order to establish whether your institution is eligible for accreditation under the accreditation scheme you have applied for. This will be followed by further investigation of public records, the taking up of bank and personal references, credit checks where deemed appropriate, and the scrutiny of your website and other promotional material. Where any additional checks are required for the scheme you have applied for, details are listed in the relevant scheme document.

A member of BAC staff will contact you to seek clarification or request additional documentation if the submission is incomplete, if there are discrepancies in the information or if elements of your institution's provision do not meet BAC's requirements. There will be no further progress until these matters have been satisfactorily resolved.

Once all the outstanding issues have been resolved, the complete application will be considered by the Inspections Manager who will confirm whether or not your institution has passed the application review.

Applications remain live for up to six months. Should the application not be considered complete before the end of this period, you will need to submit a new application.

5.3 Reaccreditation applications

Accredited institutions wishing to remain in accreditation must submit an application for reaccreditation and undergo a full reaccreditation inspection every three or four years. BAC expects that our accredited institutions will develop and improve their quality assurance processes over the period of accreditation. BAC will also hold information about your institution from your annual returns and other sources which will contribute to the reaccreditation inspection.

BAC will contact your institution six months before your accreditation is due to expire, setting out the application procedure for reaccreditation and the application deadline. The deadline will normally be three months before the expiry date of your current accreditation. To remain in accreditation, we must receive your application for reaccreditation by this deadline, comprising the following completed documents:

- Reaccreditation application form.
- Data collection form.
- Required supporting documentation (see relevant scheme or criteria document).
- Payment of a deposit for inspection fee (see fees sheet).

The appropriate reaccreditation application form with guidance notes can be downloaded from the BAC website. You will need to complete all sections of the application form carefully and submit three copies of the application form and all supporting documentation to the BAC office.

A reaccreditation inspection will be organised only if BAC has received a completed application for reaccreditation along with full payment of the deposit by the deadline given. Should you fail to undergo a reaccreditation inspection before your current accreditation expiry date and without having been granted an extension by the Accreditation Committee, your accreditation will be withdrawn.

If you wish to apply for a different scheme as part of your reaccreditation process, you should review the relevant scheme documents and then contact the BAC office to discuss your options.

Applications from institutions refused accreditation

While institutions which are refused accreditation or which have their accreditation withdrawn are free to re-apply, BAC reserves the right to set a minimum time period which must elapse before a re-application will be accepted.

6. INSPECTION

6.1 The inspection process

The primary method for assessing whether an institution meets the standards required for accreditation is an on-site inspection carried out by members of our team of independent inspectors who are appointed and trained by BAC. No institution will be awarded accreditation or reaccreditation without a full inspection of its provision in all the areas outlined in the relevant scheme document.

In addition to the full accreditation and reaccreditation inspections which follow applications by institutions, a number of other inspections are organised by BAC for specific reasons, including:

- Supplementary inspections of institutions which have had a decision on accreditation deferred.
- Supplementary inspections of accredited institutions which have undergone significant changes.
- Interim inspections of accredited institutions during the period of accreditation.
- Spot check inspections of accredited institutions for BAC's monitoring purposes.

While BAC's inspections are key to assessing whether or not your institution should be accredited or reaccredited, they are also intended to provide advice and support within your own framework of quality management. The inspectors used are all educational experts with extensive knowledge of the sector who will be happy to share examples of good practice and to suggest ways in which your institution can continue to improve its provision beyond BAC's minimum standards.

Once we have authorised an inspection and determined the appropriate size and composition of the inspection team, you will be asked to suggest suitable inspection dates. Accreditation or reaccreditation inspections will be scheduled for days on which the largest sample of teaching can be observed. BAC is required to give its inspectors at least three weeks' notice of an inspection. The final decision on whether and on what dates an inspection will go ahead rests with BAC.

Selecting the inspection team

The inspection team is carefully selected by the Head of Professional Services, taking into account the experience, specialisms, location and availability of inspectors. BAC's inspectors are required to sign a declaration identifying any conflicts of interest. They are also required to observe confidentiality as to both the process and the outcome of an inspection. You will be informed of the names of the inspectors before the inspection.

The size of the inspection team will depend on the size and diversity of your curriculum, but full inspections will normally require at least two inspectors for two days. A designated reporting inspector (RI) will be responsible for determining the schedule of the inspection and for producing the final report for consideration by the Accreditation Committee.

Preparing for your inspection

Once an inspection has been organised, you will receive written confirmation of the dates, the names of the inspection team and details of the inspection including a list of premises to be visited. You should inform your staff that an inspection will be taking place and, if possible, arrange an initial meeting with all staff so that inspectors can introduce themselves and describe what will be taking place.

It is the inspectors' intention to avoid disruption of your normal activities as far as possible during the inspection. You are therefore required to supply a full timetable for classes taking place during the inspection and to suggest times at which key personnel will be available to meet the inspectors. The RI will take these into account when allocating the inspection team's time. However, the RI is responsible for producing the inspection timetable to ensure it accords with other commitments and meets the needs of the inspection team.

Self evaluation

Institutions are required to complete and submit a self-evaluation document assessing their quality assurance mechanisms against BAC's minimum standards prior to the inspection being conducted.

Paying for the inspection

All inspections are subject to an inspection fee payable to BAC by the institution, with the exception of interim inspections in the UK which are included in the annual accreditation fee. Details of the fees for each type of inspection can be found on the fees sheet which is published separately. Except in the case of inspections organised by BAC with less than four weeks' notice, the inspection fee will be payable before the inspection. In all cases, the inspection report and any decision of the Accreditation Committee will not be released until the fee has been paid in full.

Cancelling an inspection

BAC reserves the right to cancel the inspection or change the date or inspectors prior to the commencement of the inspection. Please note that BAC would only make such changes once all other options had been exhausted and where it would be impossible or detrimental to go ahead with the inspection as planned. If an inspection is cancelled by your institution within four weeks of the start of the inspection, a cancellation fee is payable (see fees sheet). The same cancellation fee is payable by your institution if an inspection

6. INSPECTION

is cancelled by BAC for the reason that you have either failed to agree an inspection timetable with the inspection team or failed to submit any documentation which was requested in advance.

If you cancel or change the date of an inspection with more than four weeks' notice, there is no cancellation fee, but your institution is liable for any costs already incurred by the inspectors. Similarly, only costs which have already been incurred are payable if BAC has organised an inspection with less than four weeks' notice.

6.2 Types of inspection

6.2.1 Full accreditation inspection

Institutions applying for accreditation and which have been established for more than 12 months, or have already begun teaching students enrolled on their courses, will undergo a single, full accreditation inspection. A full inspection will assess whether and to what extent your institution meets BAC's minimum standards in each of the areas of provision as detailed in the relevant scheme document. However, the purpose of the inspection is not only to assess what can be observed during the days of the inspection, but also to consider evidence that satisfactory standards are likely to be maintained in the longer term.

Some of this assessment will be based on documentation supplied before the inspection, enabling the inspection team to identify areas central to quality management which will be explored in later interviews with key staff. These are likely to include:

- The quality and stability of the academic and managerial staff.
- The procedures established by your institution to monitor student progress and attendance and to respond to apparent underperformance.
- Your institution's response to comments made by external examiners or moderators.
- Your institution's procedures for development and appraisal.
- Any other procedures established by your institution to monitor and enhance its performance.

While the exact nature of an inspection is likely to vary according to the size and complexity of the academic programme, there are elements which are common to all inspections:

- Introductory meeting with staff (at least senior management).
- An initial tour of the premises.
- Individual meetings with key academic and managerial staff.
- A study of a representative sample of marked student work.
- Scrutiny of additional documentation, including staff and student records.
- A detailed survey of the library and other academic resources.
- A meeting with a representative group of students.
- Observation of a representative sample of classes.
- A final meeting with the principal/director and senior management to give an informal report on the findings of the inspection. This will not indicate whether the outcome will lead to the accreditation of your institution, since the final decision on this lies entirely with BAC's Accreditation Committee or a designated sub-committee of its members.

6.2.2 Staged inspections for new institutions

New institutions, based in the UK, applying for College or Short Course Provider accreditation, which have been in operation for less than 12 months and have not yet begun classes, may undergo a staged inspection process.

Please note that BAC will make the final decision on whether your institution should undergo a single inspection or staged inspections.

The candidacy inspection

If a staged process is deemed appropriate, the first inspection (the candidacy inspection) will focus upon compliance with the minimum standards for premises and facilities, management, staffing and administration and documentation relevant to student welfare. The inspectors will also make an initial assessment of academic resources in the light of your institution's advertised academic programmes.

It will normally be a one-day inspection by two inspectors, depending on the size of your institution and the number of sites at which it operates.

If the decision of the Accreditation Committee is positive, your institution will be awarded the status of 'approved candidate for BAC accreditation' for six months.

The accreditation inspection

The second inspection (the accreditation inspection) will focus on the educational provision and your institution's own procedures to monitor and enhance the quality of its provision. It will normally be either a one-day inspection by two inspectors or a two-day inspection by one inspector, depending on the size of your institution and the number of sites at which it operates, and will assess the extent to which minimum standards have been met in teaching, learning and assessment, student/participant welfare and other matters of quality assurance within your organisation. The inspectors will also hold a meeting with one or more group of students/participants, and conduct a spot check of any areas of concern noted in the candidacy inspection report.

All inspections will focus on your institution's arrangements for quality assurance throughout the institution.

6.2.3 Supplementary inspections

A supplementary inspection will normally be carried out either after the deferral of a decision on accreditation or after a significant change in the premises, management or academic programme at your institution. It may focus on a number of specific issues or it may look at a broader range of areas.

A supplementary inspection is normally carried out by one inspector and will normally last for either one day or half a day, although a broader scope may sometimes require more inspectors or more days. Your institution will be required to pay for this inspection, and the scope and costs of the inspection will be kept to a minimum.

6.2.4 'Top-up' inspection

BAC formally recognises the quality assurance processes of a number of other inspection and review bodies and where appropriate will consider 'top-up' inspections of those institutions which have undergone such a process.

Accreditation UK

EFL/ESOL providers currently accredited by the British Council under the Accreditation UK scheme will be eligible for a top-up inspection by BAC. BAC's inspection will be largely restricted to items relevant to non-EFL/ESOL academic programmes (including teaching and academic management, procedures and resources), although the adequacy of the relationship between EFL/ESOL and other programmes will be considered where EFL/ESOL is offered as an ancillary subject. Institutions wishing to be considered for inspection within these procedures should inform BAC at the time of applying for accreditation or reaccreditation. By making such an application, you agree to allowing and enabling the sharing of inspection reports and other information between BAC and the British Council.

Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate

Institutions registered with the Department for Education as an independent school and which have received an inspection by Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), the Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) or the School Inspection Service (SIS) under section 162a of the Education Act 2003 may be eligible for a top-up inspection by BAC.

A top-up inspection will normally only be carried out if your Ofsted/ISI inspection took place less than 18 months previously and the report showed a minimum award of "good" for Quality of Teaching and a minimum award of "satisfactory" for all other aspects.

In addition to providing the Accreditation Committee with current information on the institution, BAC's top-up inspection will focus on two major areas:

- Your institution's response to any deficiencies identified in the Ofsted or ISI report.
- An evaluation of elements of your provision which lie outside the scope of the report. These are likely to include:
 - specific academic and pastoral requirements of adult students
 - specific academic and pastoral requirements of child and adult overseas students
 - academic programmes such as university foundation programmes, pre-sessional programmes and ancillary subjects such as English language or study skills which fall outside the purview of Ofsted or ISI
 - advice on entry to higher education.

The scope of the inspection and the size of the inspection team will be dependent on the extent to which the Ofsted or ISI inspection involved an assessment of your full provision. If you also offer residential accommodation, a specific inspection of this provision may be required if either it has not been inspected within 18 months or it did not receive a satisfactory grading for all aspects in the report.

Educational Oversight bodies

Institutions which have received a 'confidence' judgement from one of the educational oversight bodies designated by the UK Border Agency may be eligible for a top-up inspection by BAC. Institutions wishing to be considered within these procedures should inform BAC at the time of applying for accreditation or reaccreditation.

6. INSPECTION

6.2.5 Interim inspection

All accredited institutions are required to undergo an interim inspection part of the way through each period of accreditation. Interim inspections are designed both to ensure that the minimum standards required for accreditation are being maintained and to assess your progress in responding to the action points listed in your last inspection report. They also provide an opportunity for you to discuss with the inspector any changes which have taken place since the previous inspection and any planned developments. For newly accredited institutions, this will take place in the first year after your accreditation. For accredited institutions, it will be organised in the middle of the accreditation cycle.

An interim inspection is normally carried out by one inspector and will normally last half a day, depending on the size of your institution and diversity of your academic programme. Interim inspections are normally carried out at BAC's expense for institutions operating in the UK and are covered in the annual accreditation fees.

Following an interim inspection, the report will be considered by the Accreditation Committee (or a sub-committee of its members) which will decide either that accreditation should continue or that there are areas of concern which require further action. The report will be sent to you with details of the decision and any further action required.

6.2.6 Spot check inspection

A spot check is an inspection removed from the normal accreditation process and which is not arranged with the institution in advance. BAC may or may not give you prior notification of an impending spot check inspection.

There are two kinds of spot check inspection:

- Spot check inspections are carried out each year on a number of accredited institutions, selected at random as part of BAC's ongoing monitoring process of its accredited institutions. You will not be charged for this type of inspection.
- A spot check inspection may be ordered at the discretion of BAC. An ordered spot check inspection is normally carried out at the expense of your institution. The reasons for requesting a spot check inspection may include:
 - failure to submit an annual return by the deadline
 - failure to notify BAC of a significant change
 - failure to respond promptly to a request for information
 - failure to cooperate fully and promptly with BAC's complaints procedure
 - specific intelligence received from one of the bodies with which BAC shares information
 - receipt of any other evidence that your institution is not maintaining the minimum standards or agreed obligations required for accreditation.

6.3 Compliance with statutory requirements

All new applicants and those applying for reaccreditation are required to sign a declaration stating that the institution complies with all relevant statutory requirements in connection with health and safety, safeguarding, employment law, copyright, disability provision, equal opportunities, planning consent, data protection and public liability. It is the institutions' responsibility and the personal responsibility of the head of the institution to ensure that all requirements are met. BAC inspectors will not inspect the above areas but will note any observed breach of regulations. Any breach will be conveyed to the Accreditation Committee as a 'no confidence' judgement in the ability of the institution to self assess in these matters and will call into question the integrity of the senior management who will have endorsed the declaration.

7. THE AWARD OF ACCREDITATION

7.1 Decisions on the award of accreditation

Following inspections, the inspection report will be considered by the Accreditation Committee, which will make one of the decisions set out below. The Accreditation Committee may, at its discretion, delegate to a sub-committee the consideration of reports. These decisions will be advised to the institution, and any decision made by the sub-committee will be reported to the Accreditation Committee at its next meeting.

The Accreditation Committee can decide to award, refuse or defer a decision on accreditation or reaccreditation, or, in exceptional circumstances, to suspend or withdraw an institution's accreditation.

The Chief Executive will inform you of the outcome within ten working days of the decision made by the Accreditation Committee or the sub-committee and will send you a copy of the inspection report, along with an accreditation certificate if accreditation or reaccreditation has been awarded.

Award of accreditation

- Accreditation can be awarded following the full accreditation inspection of an unaccredited institution or following the accreditation inspection of an institution which is an approved candidate for BAC accreditation.
- Reaccreditation can be awarded following the full reaccreditation inspection of an accredited institution.

Accreditation or reaccreditation is awarded if the Accreditation Committee is satisfied that the institution meets or exceeds BAC's minimum standards for the appropriate scheme in all areas of its provision. Accreditation or reaccreditation is normally awarded for a period of three or four years.

Deferral of a decision on accreditation

- The Accreditation Committee may defer a decision on accreditation, reaccreditation or candidacy if the inspection report indicates that your institution has not met all the minimum standards required but that the outstanding issues are minor and could be resolved easily within a short period of time.
- A decision can be deferred for up to six months, during which time your institution must address the mandatory action points identified in the inspection report.
- The Accreditation Committee will require that, before the end of the deferral period, your institution either undergoes a supplementary inspection at your expense or submits documentary evidence that the outstanding action points have been addressed.

- The supplementary inspection report or documentary submission will be considered by the Accreditation Committee before the end of the deferral period, and a decision on accreditation, reaccreditation or candidacy will then be made.
- If the supplementary inspection report indicates significant concerns other than those which led to the deferral, the Accreditation Committee may require an additional full inspection at your institution's expense before making a decision on accreditation, reaccreditation or candidacy. If necessary, the deferral period may be extended to allow for this to take place.
- If your institution fails either to submit satisfactory documentary evidence or to undergo a supplementary inspection before the end of the deferral period, the Accreditation Committee may refuse or withdraw accreditation or approved candidate status. A new application will then be required should your institution wish to pursue accreditation further.

Refusal, suspension or withdrawal of accreditation

The Accreditation Committee may refuse, suspend or withdraw accreditation if the inspection report indicates that your institution has failed to meet the minimum standards required for accreditation. If accreditation is refused or withdrawn, the reasons will be clearly explained in the inspection report and the accompanying letter. The institution has the right to appeal against the decision (see section 9 of this handbook).

7.2 Action points

The concluding section of an inspection report normally contains a number of action points. These are categorised as being of high, medium or low priority.

- High priority - those which the inspectors consider it necessary to action as a matter of urgency.
- Medium priority - those which the inspectors have concerns about but which can be actioned in a longer time-frame.
- Low priority – those which the inspectors consider would benefit the institution and would enhance the quality of the provision and foster best practice.

These action points will be taken into account by the Accreditation Committee when making the decision regarding the award of accreditation or continued accreditation.

7. THE AWARD OF ACCREDITATION

7.3 Candidates for accreditation

If your institution has been operating for less than twelve months and has not yet recruited any students, you may be able to apply to BAC for ‘candidate for accreditation’ status. The candidate for accreditation process is only available if you are applying under either the College or the Short Course Provider scheme and if you are operating in the UK. Please note the following points:

- The status of ‘approved candidate for BAC accreditation’ can be awarded following a candidacy inspection.
- Your institution will be approved as a ‘candidate for BAC accreditation’ if the Accreditation Committee is satisfied that the institution meets or exceeds BAC’s minimum standards for candidate accreditation on premises and management, and that the required documentation relevant to student welfare and robust quality assurance procedures are in place.
- ‘Approved candidate’ status is awarded for a period of six months following a successful candidacy inspection, during which time BAC will arrange an accreditation inspection.
- If your institution fails to agree a date for the accreditation inspection within this period, its ‘approved candidate’ status will lapse, unless, exceptionally, the Accreditation Committee agrees to allow an extension. Requests for extension of accreditation must be received before the expiry date of your candidate accreditation.

Please refer to section 6.2.2 of this handbook for details of the candidacy inspection process.

7.4 After accreditation is awarded

Following the award of accreditation you are permitted to use the BAC logo and statement of accreditation, as well as being listed in the BAC directory of accredited institutions on the BAC website. You will also be given access to the College Gateway.

In order to improve transparency and public accountability, BAC reserves the right to publish the reports of accredited institutions on its website. Full detail regarding any process of report publication will be made available on the BAC website and circulated to accredited colleges at least one month prior to implementation.

Statement of accreditation

Institutions which have been awarded accreditation may use the statement of accreditation and the BAC logo in their promotional materials, subject to certain conditions.

Acceptable forms of the statement are:

- “accredited by the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education”
- “accredited by the British Accreditation Council”
- “accredited by BAC”
- “BAC accredited”.

Approved candidates for accreditation must append the words: ‘Approved candidate for accreditation’ wherever the approval statement appears on all their publicity material.

Additional variants of the statement may be used by your institution depending on the scheme for which you have been accredited. Details of the specific statements can be found in the relevant scheme document.

Accreditation marks

Institutions accredited by BAC are encouraged to use the logo on all appropriate documentation and publicity, but please be aware of the following restrictions:

- You must use only an official graphic supplied by BAC and which is available in several variations to meet contextual design considerations.
- The size, positioning and colouring must adhere to BAC’s design specification. Details of this specification and further guidance on using the accreditation mark are available, along with the graphic files, from the BAC office and from the College Gateway on the BAC website.
- If you wish to use the accreditation mark on your website you should use the HTML code supplied by BAC, allowing web users to click through to the institution directory on the BAC website.
- You will be notified of any changes to the accreditation mark at least 30 days before they take effect. You should then replace all instances of the accreditation mark in your promotional materials as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- The BAC logo and accreditation mark must not be used on award, attendance or completion certificates unless you have been granted permission in writing from BAC to do so.
- The BAC logo is a registered trademark and you must not duplicate, recreate or adapt the logo except as part of the agreed usage of the accreditation mark described above.

As the 'approved candidate' status is normally awarded only for a limited period of six months, BAC urges caution in referring to this status in any promotional material which might remain in circulation beyond the end of this period; you should consider the expense of replacing such materials before printing. BAC does however encourage approved candidate institutions to refer to their status and use the appropriate mark graphic on their websites and in other time-limited promotional materials.

Website directory

An institution directory is published on the BAC website and represents the definitive, current list of BAC-accredited institutions. You should familiarise yourself with your directory entry, check it on a regular basis and notify BAC if any obsolete or incorrect information is included.

It is a condition of accreditation that certain basic information on accredited institutions be published in the website directory, details of which can be confirmed with the BAC office. The information to be published will be reviewed periodically and is subject to change, but will include your institution's name, head of institution, address, contact details and a list of subjects and programmes offered.

Newly accredited institutions are added to the directory once the decision letter, inspection report and accreditation certificate have been dispatched. Institutions whose accreditation has been withdrawn will remain in the directory until the time allowed for lodging an appeal has expired and any subsequent appeal process has been exhausted.

7.5 Conditions of accreditation

While you are right to be proud of gaining BAC accreditation, in order to protect the quality of our accreditation the following conditions apply:

- Accreditation covers all eligible provision which you have declared to BAC.
- Accreditation applies to your institution as a whole and must not be construed as accreditation or validation of individual programmes or awards.
- Accreditation applies only to the specific institution whose application BAC received and not to any partner, branch or otherwise connected institution.
- You must avoid any inaccurate or misleading statements concerning your accreditation and if uncertain, should contact BAC to seek clarification on what is acceptable. Any breach of this condition may lead to the suspension or withdrawal of your accreditation.

- If your accreditation is withdrawn, you must remove all statements or claims of accreditation by BAC from your promotional and other material as soon as is reasonably practicable and must immediately refrain from representing yourself as BAC accredited.
- Unaccredited institutions which have applied for accreditation must not make public reference to their application. Any breach of this condition may be taken into account in any subsequent decision on accreditation.

7.6 Maintaining accreditation

Gaining accreditation, although a major achievement for any institution, is not the end of the process. As an accredited institution, you have continuing responsibilities both to maintain the standards required for BAC accreditation and to cooperate fully with BAC in its monitoring of these standards.

Specific duties arising from these responsibilities are listed below:

- Continue to comply with all relevant laws and regulations
- Continue to maintain all of the minimum standards required for BAC accreditation (as set out in the relevant scheme document).
- Work to meet the requirements set out in previous inspection reports and consider the additional recommendations.
- Submit to BAC's regular monitoring procedures, including:
 - notify BAC of any significant changes
 - interim inspections
 - spot check inspections
 - annual returns
 - respond promptly to any requests from BAC for information
 - address to BAC's satisfaction any concerns raised by government or other bodies with which BAC shares information
 - cooperate fully and promptly with BAC's complaints procedure
 - pay promptly your annual accreditation fee and any inspection fees incurred
 - submit an application for reaccreditation and undergo a full reaccreditation inspection before the expiry date of your current accreditation.

The failure of your institution to meet any of the above requirements may lead to the suspension or withdrawal of your accreditation.

7. THE AWARD OF ACCREDITATION

Notification of changes

You must notify BAC immediately of any significant changes to your provision, premises, management or ownership.

Examples of what constitutes a significant change include:

- Change of institution name.
- Change of ownership or company registration.
- Change of company directors.
- Change of principal, academic manager or any other person responsible for the institution's operation.
- Relocation to new premises.
- Use of additional premises.
- Change in the academic programme as seen in the previous inspection.

It is your responsibility to inform BAC, in good time, when such changes occur. If such a change is planned in advance, you should notify BAC as soon as is reasonably practicable, to allow a prompt decision to be taken on any course of action. In the case of unplanned changes, you should notify BAC as soon as is reasonably practicable and not later than one week after the change has occurred.

BAC reserves the right to review your accreditation in the light of such changes and to require either the submission of documentary evidence or a supplementary inspection, at your institution's expense, depending on the nature of the change. Failure to cooperate with such a requirement from BAC will lead to the suspension or withdrawal of accreditation. A number of forms are available for notifying BAC of significant changes. These forms are available from the BAC office or can be downloaded from the College Gateway on the BAC website.

Examples of additional documentary evidence which may be required include:

- A personal reference and CV for any newly appointed principal.
- A written statement explaining the reasons behind any change in name.
- Details of any new programme being introduced, including proof of centre approval by the awarding body where applicable.

Interim inspections

All accredited institutions are required to undergo an interim inspection part of the way through each period of accreditation as part of BAC's quality monitoring process. The interim inspection report will be considered by the Accreditation Committee (or a sub-committee of its members), which will decide either that accreditation should continue or that there are areas of concern which require further action. The report will be sent to you with details of the decision and any further action required.

Where an interim inspection report identifies significant problems or evidence that you are not meeting BAC's minimum standards, the Accreditation Committee may require further action, such as:

- A further full or supplementary inspection at your institution's expense.
- An unannounced spot check at your institution's expense.
- The submission of an action plan for addressing the issues identified.
- The setting of a deadline for the submission of documentary evidence demonstrating that the issues identified have been resolved.

Spot check inspections

A spot check is an inspection removed from the normal accreditation process and which is not arranged with the institution in advance. BAC may or may not give you prior notification of an impending spot check inspection.

The spot check inspection report will be considered by the Accreditation Committee, which will decide either that accreditation should continue or that there are areas of concern which require further action. You will be sent details of any decision and of any further action required.

Where a spot check inspection report identifies significant problems or evidence that your institution is not maintaining BAC's minimum standards, the Accreditation Committee may require further action, including:

- A further unannounced spot check inspection at your institution's expense.
- A further full or supplementary inspection at your institution's expense.
- The submission of an action plan for addressing the issues identified.
- The setting of a deadline for the submission of documentary evidence demonstrating that the issues identified have been resolved.

Where a spot check inspection identifies evidence of a serious breach of the law, a significant risk to the welfare of students or an attempt to deceive BAC or its inspectors, the Accreditation Committee (or its designated sub-committee) may withdraw your institution's accreditation with immediate effect.

Full cooperation with any action required by the Accreditation Committee following an interim or a spot check inspection is a condition of continuing accreditation. In some cases, the Accreditation Committee may decide to suspend your accreditation while such action is carried out. Any subsequent failure of your institution to cooperate fully may lead to the immediate withdrawal of accreditation.

Annual return

You are required to submit an annual return after the end of each academic year and, in doing so, alert BAC to any changes which may affect the standards of provision offered by your institution. Where significant changes have occurred, a BAC representative may inspect your institution and prepare a report for the Accreditation Committee.

The annual return will include the following information and documentation:

- A declaration of financial viability by the principal/director.
- A copy of your institution's most recent statutory accounts.
- Details of any significant changes in ownership, management, location or academic programme.
- Details of courses offered in the previous year, including numbers enrolled on each course, cohort progression, numbers completing and pass rates in any examinations taken.
- A list of courses offered in the current academic year, including the level of the course in relation to the National Qualifications Framework or Qualifications and Credit Framework and the name of the awarding body.
- An outline of planned developments.

Annual return declarations

You will need to provide BAC with:

- Details of any litigation in which your institution was involved.
- A declaration that your institution meets all relevant statutory requirements. If, at a future stage, the Accreditation Committee considers there to be convincing evidence that this was not the case, BAC may withdraw accreditation immediately.
- A declaration that you are happy for information to be shared with government and other bodies with which BAC cooperates, in pursuit of their proper monitoring objectives.
- Your continued acceptance of BAC's terms and conditions.

N.B. The above lists are not exhaustive and are reviewed for possible amendment each year.

Payment of accreditation fees

All accredited institutions are required to pay an annual accreditation fee. The exact fee payable by most institutions depends on the number of students enrolled at your institution over the previous year. You must therefore supply BAC with accurate enrolment figures once per year on request. If you fail to supply such figures by the deadline given, you will be liable for the maximum accreditation fee. If you fail to pay the annual accreditation fee by the deadline given on the invoice, BAC will assume that you have decided to withdraw voluntarily from accreditation.

If you decide to withdraw voluntarily from accreditation, you must give BAC at least one month's notice. If you withdraw voluntarily in the first six months of the accreditation year (September - February), you will be liable for payment of half of the annual fee. If you withdraw voluntarily on or after 1 March each year, you will be liable for full payment of the annual fee.

7.7 The reaccreditation process

Accreditation is usually awarded for three or four years. If you wish to remain in accreditation, you must submit an application for reaccreditation and undergo a full reaccreditation inspection before your accreditation expires. Should you fail to undergo a reaccreditation inspection before your current accreditation expiry date, your institution's accreditation will be withdrawn. The procedure for application for reaccreditation is set out in section 5.3 of this handbook.

Accreditation may be extended for a period, normally of no more than one year, if the Accreditation Committee (or its designated sub-committee) considers there to be exceptional circumstances which make it necessary to delay the reaccreditation inspection. These would normally involve significant changes which are planned or which have recently taken place. Requests for an extension of full accreditation must be submitted to the BAC office at least six months before the expiry date of your current accreditation and using the appropriate form. This form is available from the BAC office or can be downloaded from the College Gateway on the BAC website.

7.8 Withdrawal and suspension of accreditation

Occasionally BAC is required to suspend or withdraw accreditation from an institution because it has failed to meet the conditions for maintaining accreditation or because its provision no longer meets BAC's minimum standards. Suspension is a private arrangement between the institution and BAC, and is usually accompanied by a set of requirements to be met by a stated deadline. Withdrawal of accreditation means that the organisation is removed from the directory of accredited institutions and external bodies will be informed.

7. THE AWARD OF ACCREDITATION

There are a number of reasons why accreditation can be suspended or withdrawn:

→ **Following an inspection**

The Accreditation Committee (or its designated sub-committee) may withdraw accreditation if the inspection report shows your institution as failing to meet the minimum standards required for accreditation as outlined in the appropriate scheme document.

→ **Following a complaint**

The Accreditation Committee (or its designated sub-committee) may suspend or withdraw accreditation following a complaint under the procedures set out in section 10 of this handbook.

→ **Failure to meet the requirements for continuing accreditation**

The Accreditation Committee (or its designated sub-committee) may suspend or withdraw accreditation if your institution fails to meet the requirements for continuing accreditation as set out in this handbook.

→ **Additional grounds for immediate suspension or withdrawal**

In addition to the above scenarios, the Accreditation Committee or sub-committee may suspend or withdraw the accreditation of your institution with immediate effect for any serious breach of the regulations in this handbook, and on the following grounds:

- conviction of the owner(s), a company director or the head of the institution on either civil or criminal grounds relevant to the good management of the institution
- bankruptcy, where the institution is owned by individuals, or insolvency, where the institution is owned by a company
- failure to comply with all relevant laws and regulations
- enrolling or offering to enrol students onto unauthorised degree programmes in breach of the Education Reform Act 1988 or programmes which lead to degrees awarded by an overseas body which is not itself accredited by a recognised accrediting agency
- failure to respond within reasonable time to a request from BAC in respect of a complaint from a student or external body
- non-payment of accreditation, inspection or other fees
- failure to apply for reaccreditation by the deadline given
- failure to undergo a reaccreditation inspection by the accreditation expiry date
- failure to submit to a spot check, supplementary or early reaccreditation inspection required by BAC
- failure to submit a complete annual return by the deadline given

- the making of any false or intentionally misleading statements on the forms or in associated documents of the application, annual return or any other submission to BAC
- the making of any false or intentionally misleading statements or claims in respect of the nature or scope of your accreditation by BAC
- failure to notify BAC of a significant change as soon as is reasonably practicable
- changes within your institution which render it no longer eligible for BAC accreditation.

The above lists are not exhaustive. Although a breach of BAC's regulations such as those listed above will usually lead to the Accreditation Committee suspending accreditation while BAC carries out a thorough investigation, any failure by your institution to cooperate with the investigation promptly and to BAC's full satisfaction will lead to the immediate withdrawal of your institution's accreditation.

Your institution will continue to appear on the BAC directory of accredited institutions during any period of suspension, but will be removed if accreditation is subsequently withdrawn.

Appealing against the withdrawal of accreditation

If accreditation is withdrawn, you may appeal against the decision under the procedures set out in section 9 of this handbook.

Voluntary withdrawal from accreditation

If you no longer require BAC accreditation and decide to withdraw voluntarily, you must notify BAC of your intent with a letter signed by the principal/director or head of institution and delivered to the BAC office. One month's notice is required. You may be contacted to discuss your reasons for withdrawal, as BAC values all feedback on how it can improve its service to accredited institutions. If you decide to withdraw from accreditation, you will remain liable for any outstanding fees owed to BAC, including the annual accreditation fee.

After a voluntary withdrawal, BAC will remove you from its lists of accredited institutions, including the website directory, and will report the withdrawal to the Accreditation Committee and other interested parties.

8. PROGRAMMES AND AWARDS

BAC does not validate or accredit qualifications. BAC's policy is that institutions should offer courses leading to external awards granted by recognised awarding bodies. BAC does however accept that there may be instances where there is no appropriate external awarding body.

8.1 Degrees

If an institution is offering an award which is "described as a degree", it must have had degree-awarding powers officially bestowed upon it by the relevant regional or national educational agency.

Before a private institution can offer courses leading to degrees, it must enter into a formal partnership agreement with a body which has accredited degree-awarding powers and is itself accredited by a recognised accrediting agency. This would normally be a national agency or, in the case of US degrees, a body recognised by the US Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Institutions must clearly state the awarding university on all publicity material. Furthermore, institutions should not advertise pathways to a degree as a degree award.

If an institution is considering entering into a partnership enabling the offer of degree programmes, it is strongly recommended that BAC is contacted to ensure that the awarding body meets BAC's requirements. Institutions offering courses leading to degrees awarded by an overseas body should be aware that they need to show that they have taken reasonable steps to inform the person to whom the award was granted or any member of the public or particular individual to whom the offer or invitation was addressed that the award was not granted or to be granted by a national institution. Thus publicity material must state the location of the degree awarding body.

8.2 Internal awards

BAC's inspectors will consider the accuracy of any claims made by institutions as to the level and status of their internal awards.

This will include a requirement for evidence of the extent to which the institution's internal awards are accepted for the purposes of employment or further study. BAC encourages institutions to involve external moderators in the assessment of students but accepts that there may be instances where this is inappropriate.

8.3 English language teaching

BAC does not normally accredit institutions which solely or predominantly provide EFL/ESOL teaching.

This includes any provider which, while legally a division of a BAC-accredited institution, is essentially a separate organisation and is being promoted separately and under a different name. BAC considers it more appropriate for all other EFL/ESOL providers to be accredited under the Accreditation UK scheme, operated by the British Council and English UK, with whom BAC works closely.

As an exception to this rule, BAC will consider applications from providers of ESOL courses leading to an approved ESOL Skills for Life qualification, subject to their meeting all the other minimum standards for accreditation.

Where a BAC-accredited institution expands its own EFL/ESOL provision so that it becomes a significant element of its overall provision (i.e. from an ancillary student support service to fully distinct programmes of study), BAC may require the institution to apply for additional accreditation by Accreditation UK. An institution already accredited by Accreditation UK but which chooses to apply for BAC accreditation of its non-EFL/ESOL provision may be eligible for a top-up inspection. Please contact the BAC office for further details.

9. APPEALS

Accreditation by BAC is a voluntary arrangement between your institution and BAC. However, if the Accreditation Committee refuses or withdraws accreditation, your institution may appeal against the decision under the following procedure. The decision to refuse or withdraw accreditation will have been confirmed in a letter to your institution, accompanied by sufficient details of reasons why this decision was made.

The right of appeal is granted solely to provide an institution with the means of challenging either the assessment of the inspectors in the course of an inspection or the judgement of the Accreditation Committee in coming to its decision.

An institution has no right within this appeals procedure to challenge either the criteria assessed and standards required for accreditation or the general regulations that accredited institutions must follow (as set out in this handbook and any addenda). The right of an institution within this procedure is rather to challenge the application of these criteria, standards and regulations in its individual case. For complaints about the criteria, standards and regulations of BAC's accreditation scheme see section 10.3 of this handbook.

9.1 Lodging an appeal

If your institution wishes to appeal a decision, you must send to BAC written notice of intent (by letter, by scanned letter via email or by fax).

This written notice must be received by BAC within five working days of the date of the letter or email which confirms the refusal or withdrawal of accreditation. For this purpose, each working day is held to end at 16.00. Any letter confirming the refusal or withdrawal of accreditation will be delivered to the institution's designated primary contact both by email and by recorded post. You must ensure that any correspondence addressed to your primary contact is opened and dealt with in their absence.

The notice of appeal must be accompanied by full payment of the appeal fee. This fee will be refunded if the Appeal Committee overturns the decision of the Accreditation Committee.

9.2 Grounds for an appeal

The appeal submission must clearly state the grounds for the appeal, selecting one of the following arguments:

- a) that the Accreditation Committee did not have all the relevant information available to it at the time, and/or
- b) that the decision was not made in accordance with the procedures or criteria set out in the Accreditation Handbook.

If the grounds for the appeal do not fall under either of these headings, an explanation must be provided.

9.3 Appeal submission

Within ten working days of its notice of appeal, your institution must submit a statement setting out the grounds for the appeal, selecting one of the arguments described above, together with any relevant supporting documentation.

9.4 The appeals process

An appeal will be heard by an Appeal Committee, which is an unbiased body made up of one independent Chair, one layperson and one member of the BAC Council who did not vote in the original decision of the Accreditation Committee. Your institution will have the right to request that the hearing be held in public.

9.5 Additional procedures for appeals

No appeal will be heard while your institution owes BAC any accreditation, inspection or other fees. If your institution fails to settle all outstanding debts within ten working days of its notice of appeal, its right to appeal will expire.

In the period between the notice of appeal and the outcome of the appeal, an accredited institution remains accredited and an unaccredited institution remains unaccredited. When BAC receives the notice of appeal, it will send your institution a list of the individuals who may be asked to serve on the Appeal Committee. If your institution objects to any of these individuals serving, its objections and rationale should be submitted to the Chair of Council via the Chief Executive within five working days of the list being sent. The decision of the Chair in this matter will be final.

Only material which was in existence at the time of the inspection or of the report's consideration by the Accreditation Committee can be considered at an appeal. Any submission of material which was in existence at that time but was not supplied to BAC must be accompanied by an explanation of why it was not provided.

If the appeal is dismissed, the decision of the Accreditation Committee will then be confirmed. A full new application will need to be submitted if the institution wishes to re-apply for BAC accreditation, but this will not be considered until BAC is first satisfied that all the action points set out in the refusal/ withdrawal letter have been or shortly will be met.

9.6 The appeal hearing

The appeal hearing will consider documentation comprising the following, where relevant:

- The most recent application form and supporting documentation submitted by the institution.
- The relevant inspection report(s).
- Written submissions from the inspectors who carried out the relevant inspection(s).
- The appeal submission described above.
- Any other material agreed by both BAC and the appellant to be relevant.

All parties to the appeal will receive the same documentary evidence.

The appeal hearing will normally take place within 25 working days of the notice of appeal. A representative of your institution and a representative (normally the Chair or Deputy Chair) of the Accreditation Committee will have the right to appear at the hearing to give evidence to the Appeal Committee.

9.7 Decisions on appeals

At the end of the hearing, the Appeal Committee may make one of three decisions:

- To dismiss the appeal.
- To order a new inspection at BAC's expense.
- To instruct the Accreditation Committee to award or reinstate accreditation or reaccreditation.

The outcome of the appeal will be final and there will be no further recourse to the appeals process.

After the appeal hearing:

- The Appeal Committee will inform your institution of its decision within five working days of the appeal hearing.
- The Chair of the Appeal Committee will make a written report to the Chair of Council, setting out the decision, its grounds and, if appropriate, recommending changes in the inspection or accreditation process, at which point the procedure will be deemed to be exhausted.
- The outcome of the appeal will also be reported to the next meeting of the Accreditation Committee for its information.
- Upon completion, the appellant will have no further recourse to the appeals process.

Timeline for appeals (in working days):

- **Day 0**
Notification of withdrawal or refusal of accreditation sent
- **Day 5**
Deadline for notice of appeal and payment of appeal fee (see fees sheet)
- **Day 10**
Deadline for submission of appellant's grounds of appeal and supporting documentation
- **Day 30**
Deadline for holding appeal hearing
- **Day 35**
Appellant receives official confirmation of the Appeal Committee's decision

10. COMPLAINTS

All accredited institutions must have in place an explicit and fair complaints procedure to which students, their parents/guardians or other representatives have access, and this procedure should be exhausted before a complaint is referred to BAC.

10.1 Complaints by students against a BAC-accredited institution

If a student or their representative has completed the institution's own complaints procedure but has still not achieved a satisfactory resolution, the following should be submitted to BAC:

- A detailed letter of complaint, including a full description of the cause for complaint and the circumstances in which it arose.
- A signed statement authorising BAC to investigate the complaint and to raise the matter with the institution on their behalf.
- Copies of all supporting documentation relating to the complaint. A complaints pack with more detail is available to download from the BAC website. BAC staff will seek to resolve all complaints received against accredited institutions to the mutual satisfaction of the complainant and the institution, with the exception of complaints which appear to relate to offences more appropriately referred to a statutory authority.

What BAC can do

When BAC receives a complaint from a student or their representative against an accredited institution, the following procedure applies:

- BAC requests evidence to support the complaint; and
- BAC requests evidence to show that the complainant has exhausted the institution's complaints procedure.

Only if this is received, will the procedure below be followed.

- The details of the complaint will be recorded by BAC staff.
- BAC collates the relevant documentation.
- The institution concerned will be informed of the nature of the complaint and asked to investigate its cause.
- The institution will be required to submit a written response within ten working days, detailing the outcome of its investigation and, where appropriate, proposing a course of action to resolve the matter.
- BAC will inform the complainant of the outcome of the institution's investigation and any proposed course of action.
- BAC will, with the agreement of both the complainant and the institution, make reasonable attempts to mediate between the two parties in order to resolve the matter.

- BAC may make recommendations for resolving the matter but these will not be binding on either party.

If after BAC's attempts the matter remains unresolved, a report on the complaint will be made to the Accreditation Committee. A report will also be made to the Accreditation Committee if more than three complaints against any one institution are received within one year.

If a complaint is received against an institution which BAC does not accredit, BAC will ascertain whether or not the institution is accredited by another recognised accrediting body. If it is, BAC will redirect the complainant to that other body. Any new or outstanding complaint against an institution whose accreditation has been withdrawn by BAC, or which withdrew voluntarily from accreditation will be similarly redirected should the institution later be awarded accreditation by another recognised accrediting body.

The role of the Accreditation Committee

If the Accreditation Committee (or a delegated sub-committee of its members) receives a report on a complaint against an accredited institution, it will assess whether or not there is evidence that the standards required for accreditation are not being met, and it may make one of the following decisions:

- To dismiss the complaint.
- To require further investigation by BAC of the complaint, which may include an unannounced spot check at the institution's expense.
- To require the institution to undertake remedial or compensatory action where it is considered to have failed to meet its responsibilities or uphold the standards of accreditation; if the institution refuses to undertake such action, its accreditation may be suspended or withdrawn.
- To require an immediate spot check, supplementary inspection or reaccreditation inspection at the institution's expense where there is evidence that the minimum standards required for accreditation are not being met; if the institution refuses to submit to the inspection, its accreditation may be suspended or withdrawn.
- To suspend or withdraw accreditation; this decision is normally made only where the report of the complaint indicates that the institution has refused to cooperate with BAC's investigation, that it has refused to take any required remedial or compensatory action, or that there is convincing evidence of illegal behaviour by its senior management or any other serious breach of BAC's regulations.

BAC will notify the complainant and the institution in writing of the Accreditation Committee's decision.

What BAC cannot do

BAC cannot consider complaints under the following circumstances:

- Where the complainant has failed, without good reason, to make use of the institution's own complaints procedure.
- Where the complainant fails to provide evidence to support the complaint.
- Where the institution is not currently accredited by BAC, although recently accredited institutions will be contacted if possible.
- Where the substance of the complaint is not relevant to BAC's regulations or accreditation standards.
- Where the complaint is made anonymously or solely by telephone or email; complaints must be made in writing and accompanied by the complainant's name, address and signature.
- Where the complaint relates to a refund claim but is not accompanied by legible proof of payment in the form of a receipt; copies of bank statements are not sufficient.
- Where the complaint is already subject to a legal process.
- Where the complaint relates to a contractual dispute between the institution and an employee or employees.
- Where the complainant before enrolment has failed, without good reason, to establish that the content of a course is of value to him or her and that the awarding body is appropriately recognised.

Further details of BAC's student complaints procedures can be found on the BAC website.

10.2 Other complaints against accredited institutions

BAC will carry out an investigation where a statutory body shares evidence or intelligence that a BAC-accredited institution is breaching legal requirements. Under these circumstances, the statutory body will be informed of the outcome of BAC's investigation of the complaint.

No formal complaints procedure is available to any other complainant, but BAC may choose to carry out its own investigations of accredited institutions if it receives any evidence or intelligence of a failure to meet the standards required for accreditation or a breach of other BAC regulations.

10.3 Complaints against BAC

BAC is committed to working in an open, transparent and accountable way. This includes responding positively to complaints from institutions by investigating them thoroughly and, where appropriate and possible, correcting any mistakes identified.

Complaints about inspections

Complaints about the conduct of inspections should be addressed to the Inspections Manager. No action will be taken if complaints of this nature are received more than five working days after the inspection.

Inspection feedback forms

An inspection evaluation questionnaire is emailed to the institution after every inspection. Please use this to submit any feedback (positive or negative) you may have about the inspectors or the conduct of the inspection. The formal complaints procedure is not a means for institutions to provide such feedback.

Complaints about inspectors or staff

The roles and responsibilities of BAC inspectors and staff are addressed fully in their training programmes. Inspectors and staff are made aware of what is expected of them, both in the content of their work and in the way they carry it out. BAC takes seriously its duty to prepare inspectors and staff to do their work effectively, professionally and with due courtesy and regard to the institution and its staff. In turn, BAC expects that institutions will treat inspectors and staff with the respect, courtesy and professionalism necessary for a successful inspection.

BAC recognises, however, that there might be occasions when institutions may wish to complain about the conduct, behaviour and actions of BAC, its staff or its agents in relation to the published purposes, procedures, criteria, methods and protocols associated with its accreditation schemes. Complaints such as these should be sent to the Head of Accreditation. Complaints about the Head of Accreditation or the Inspections Manager should be sent instead to the Chief Executive.

The Head of Accreditation or the Inspections Manager may contact the institution to investigate any negative feedback. Feedback on an inspection is not passed to the inspector(s) concerned until after the inspection report has been considered by the Accreditation Committee. Any relevant response from the inspector(s) will be passed to the institution.

Complaints about the BAC accreditation schemes

These will be considered by BAC's Executive Committee. Complaints such as these should be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive. Complainants will be informed of the Executive Committee's response to their complaint by its Chair within ten working days of the meeting.

11. WHERE TO GET HELP

11.1 The BAC website (www.the-bac.org)

While this handbook is intended to provide a comprehensive guide to the criteria, procedures and regulations of BAC's accreditation schemes, the BAC website contains additional information on many aspects of BAC's work as well as providing a useful repository of all the documents and forms required by applicant and accredited institutions.

www.the-bac.org/about/

All about BAC, its governance, history and mission.

www.the-bac.org/accreditation/

General information about BAC's accreditation schemes, including its scheme for colleges operating outside the UK, and a repository of accreditation-related documents and forms.

www.the-bac.org/colleges/

Information on the colleges and other institutions that BAC accredits, including the comprehensive directory of accredited institutions.

www.the-bac.org/cgateway/

The College Gateway, a password-protected area for accredited institutions only, featuring an archive of email bulletins, seminar presentations and materials and a repository of relevant downloads and documents. There is also information about scheme logos and other information relevant to accredited institutions.

11.2 Contacting the BAC office

Please contact the BAC office in order to discuss specific issues related to your accreditation or to receive general pre-application advice on:

Telephone: 0300 330 1400 (UK)
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7832 3250 (overseas)
Email: info@the-bac.org

The BAC office is open from Monday to Friday 8.30-16.30, except on public holidays and during the period between Christmas and New Year. Detailed guidelines on what kind of enquiries can be answered and at what times can be found on the BAC website at www.the-bac.org/contact/.

11.3 Other useful links and resources

The following organisations can provide information and advice on statutory requirements and good practice relevant to the operations of an independent education institution in the UK and overseas.

www.acas.org.uk

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) provides a wealth of information on conflict resolution in the workplace.

www.bis.gov.uk

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is the government department responsible for supporting sustained growth and higher skills across the economy, especially through further and higher education and skills training. You will find information relating to the award of UK degrees here: www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-education/recognised-uk-degrees/.

www.businesslink.gov.uk; www.bgateway.com; www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk

You can consult the above websites for information about links between education and business in your region or country.

www.britishcouncil.org

The British Council works with government policy makers, higher education agencies, university leaders, academics and students worldwide to support international higher education. It offers face-to-face English language courses in 80 teaching centres around the world and administers more than two million exams, including the IELTS test, in more than 100 countries every year. It accredits 500 teaching centres in the UK.

www.charity-commission.gov.uk; www.oscr.org.uk; www.charitycommissionni.org.uk

Contact the above for information about charity registration and regulation in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

www.cla.co.uk

The Copyright Licensing Agency tells you all you need to know about registration and restrictions on photocopying and other copyright information.

www.companieshouse.gov.uk

Companies House provides a wealth of information about companies registered in the UK.

www.cvu.ac.uk

The Council of Validating Universities promotes good practice in collaborative provision between UK universities and their partners.

www.direct.gov.uk

Direct Gov provides general advice on UK laws and regulations.

www.enqua.eu

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) disseminates information, experiences and good practices in the field of quality assurance in higher education to European quality assurance agencies, public authorities and higher education institutions.

www.equalityhumanrights.com

The Equality and Human Rights Commission provides advice and guidance on equal rights issues.

www.hse.gov.uk

The Health and Safety Executive offers guidance and advice on health and safety. Further information can be found with the Fire Protection Association (www.thefpa.co.uk), the Planning Portal (www.planningportal.gov.uk) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (www.communities.gov.uk).

www.ico.gov.uk

Registration with the Information Commissioner's Office is required for any organisation holding electronic data on its students or employees. There is also a considerable amount of further information on data protection available.

www.ifl.ac.uk

The Institute for Learning (IfL) is the independent professional body for teachers and trainers in further education and skills. The role of IfL is to support professional development in order to deliver the best possible teaching experience to learners. Its members gain access to a telephone help-line, regional advisers, CPD advice and events.

www.inqaahe.org

The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) is a world-wide association of over 200 organisations active in the theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education.

www.isa-gov.org.uk

Contact the Independent Safeguarding Authority for details of registration, requirements and legislation regarding safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in England. Disclosure Scotland (www.disclosurescotland.co.uk) provides similar information and advice in Scotland.

www.londoninternational.ac.uk

Through the University of London International Programmes, formerly the University of London External System, the University of London has made accessible its degree programmes to students all over the world since 1858. It has over 50,000 students in every corner of the globe studying on more than 100 programmes.

www.ofqual.gov.uk

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is responsible for maintaining standards, improving confidence and distributing information about qualifications and examinations. It regulates general and vocational qualifications in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. It gives formal recognition to bodies and organisations that deliver qualifications and assessments. It also accredits their awards and monitors their activities.

www.oft.gov.uk; www.tradingstandards.gov.uk

Consult the above websites of the Office of Fair Trading and Trading Standards for details of legislation and guidance relating to consumer protection.

www8.open.ac.uk/about/validate

Through its partnerships with a range of students worldwide, the Open University (OU) validates awards which have parity of esteem with awards offered throughout UK higher education.

www.qaa.ac.uk

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is the educational oversight body and quality assurance agency for higher education in the UK. QAA exists to assure standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

www.sqa.org.uk

The Scottish Qualifications Authority is the Scottish equivalent of Ofqual and is also an awarding body in its own right.

www.study-uk.org

Study UK is the membership association for independent colleges. If accepted into membership, your institution will be entitled to use the Study UK member logo on its stationery, literature and website, as well as take advantage of the association's activities and services.

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

The UK Border Agency is the government arm dealing with immigration. There is a considerable amount of information regarding Tier 4 sponsorship, student visitor visas and legislation and regulations on the migration of students and workers on their website.

The UK Visa Service (www.ukvisas.gov.uk) also provides information about visa requirements and procedures.

www.ukcisa.org.uk

The UK Council for International Student Affairs is an invaluable source of advice and guidance for students coming to study in the UK. Other useful contacts include the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (www.oisc.gov.uk) and the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (www.ilpa.org.uk).

www.uknarc.org.uk

UK NARIC is the national agency responsible for providing information, advice and expert opinion on vocational, academic and professional skills and qualifications from over 180 countries worldwide.

www.universitiesuk.ac.uk

Universities UK (UUK) is the representative organisation for the UK's universities. Together with Higher Education Wales and Universities Scotland, its mission is to be the definitive voice for all universities in the UK, providing high quality leadership and support to its members to promote a successful and diverse higher education sector.



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